

# Action Steps for Parents if Child Care or Early Childhood Programs are Closed or Children are Sick and Must Stay Home

- ▶ Have activities for your children to do while at home. Pull together games, books, DVDs and other items to keep your family entertained.
- ▶ Find out if your employer will allow you to stay at home to care for sick household members or children whose early childhood programs have closed. Ask if you can work from home. If this is not possible, find other ways to care for your children at home.
- ▶ Try to develop safe backup child care arrangements with neighbors, friends, co-workers, or church groups. These should consist of small groups of children (for example, groups with 6 or fewer children) and have a stable child care provider.
- ▶ Get children from 6 months to 5 years of age vaccinated for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu when vaccines become available. Infants younger than 6 months of age are particularly vulnerable to flu because they are too young to be vaccinated. All persons (including parents) who live with and care for a child less than 6 months old should be vaccinated against both seasonal and 2009 H1N1 flu. Vaccines should be considered for anyone who is at higher risk for complications from seasonal flu or 2009 H1N1 flu.

## Tips for taking care of children (and other household members) with the flu

- ▶ **Stay home if you or your child is sick** until at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of a fever-reducing medicine). Keeping sick children at home means that they keep their viruses to themselves rather than sharing them with others. Sick people should stay home even if they are taking antiviral medicines.
- ▶ **Cover coughs and sneezes. Clean hands with soap and water** often and especially after coughing or sneezing. If soap and water are not available, and hands are not visibly dirty, you can use alcohol-based hand cleaners.
- ▶ **Keep sick household members in a separate room** (a sick room) in the house as much as possible to limit contact with household members who are not sick. Consider designating a single person as the main caregiver for sick people.
- ▶ **Monitor the health of the sick child and any other household members** by checking for fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Celsius measured by mouth) and other symptoms of flu. Symptoms of flu include fever or chills and cough or sore throat. In addition, symptoms of flu can include runny nose, body aches, headache, tiredness, diarrhea, and vomiting.
- ▶ **Watch for emergency warning signs** that need urgent medical attention. These warning signs include one or more of the following:
  - fast breathing, trouble breathing, shortness of breath, or stopping breathing;
  - bluish, purplish, or gray skin color especially around the lips and the inside of the mouth, or around the nails;



- not drinking enough fluids, refusing to drink;
- not urinating, decreased number of wet diapers, or no tears when crying;
- severe or persistent vomiting;
- not waking up or not interacting (e.g., unusually quiet and inactive, no interest in playing, no interest in favorite toy);
- being so irritable that the child does not want to be held, or cannot be consoled;
- pain or pressure in the chest or stomach;
- sudden dizziness;
- confusion; and
- flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough.

- ▶ ***Check with your doctor about any special care*** needed for household members who may be at higher risk for complications from flu. This includes children younger than 5 years of age, pregnant women, people of any age who have certain chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), and people age 65 years and older.
- ▶ ***Have the sick household member wear a facemask*** – if available and tolerable – when sharing common spaces with other household members to help prevent spreading the virus to others. This is especially important if other household members are at high risk for complications from flu.
- ▶ ***Ask your doctor about antiviral medicines or fever-reducing medicines*** for sick household members. Do not give aspirin to children or teenagers; it can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome.
- ▶ ***Make sure sick household members get plenty of rest and drink clear fluids*** (such as water, broth, sports drinks) to prevent dehydration. For infants, use electrolyte drinks such as Pedialyte®.

## If your health department says that flu conditions have become more severe

- ▶ ***Extend the time sick children stay home*** for at least 7 days, even if they feel better sooner. People who are still sick after 7 days should continue to stay home until at least 24 hours after their symptoms have gone away.
- ▶ ***If a household member is sick, keep any school-aged brothers or sisters and children in child care or early childhood programs home*** for 5 days from the time the first household member became sick. Parents should monitor themselves and their children for fever and other symptoms of the flu.

### For more information:

- ▶ **Visit: [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)**
- ▶ **Contact CDC 24 Hours/Every Day**
  - 1 (800) CDC-INFO (232-4636)
  - TTY: (888) 232-6348
  - [cdcinfo@cdc.gov](mailto:cdcinfo@cdc.gov)